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WHA Venezuela Update

04/12/02 7:45 a.m.

- Situation in Caracas is calm. No reports of Amcit injuries.
- Latest casualty reports are 19 dead, 90 injured.
- Following repeated requests from the military, Chavez fired his cabinet and then resigned. Chavez currently being held in Fuerte Tiuna; his future is unclear.
- Pedro Carmona, head of the umbrella business group FEDECAMARAS, has been named provisional president. Carmona reportedly has called publicly for immediate elections although we have not seen a text of his statements.
- Dept. press guidance is being coordinated with the embassy, NSC. Guidance condemns undemocratic actions of Chavez government in shutting down media coverage, responsibility for firing on unarmed demonstrators.
- Draft guidance also calls for full restoration of the essential elements of democracy under provisions of OAS Democratic Charter.
- We are being very cautious in terms of how to characterize last night's events.
- We will be consulting this morning with OAS Secretary General Gaviria and other OAS members on the proper role for the OAS. We intend to encourage the OAS to offer its good offices to Venezuela to assist in the quick restoration of democratic institutions.

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